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ReadyNetGo ... News

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<http://www.readynetgo.net>

TIP(s) OF THE MONTH

A) Digital Camera Websites

Here's a list of excellent photography websites to help you get started or check out the latest digicam reviews:

1. www.photo.net
2. www.shortcourses.com
3. www.photos.msn.com
4. www.dpreview.com
5. www.dpcorner.com

B) Memory Cards

When you buy a digital camera, it will most likely come with an 8 MB or 16 MB memory card. For additional storage, you can purchase a higher capacity card such as 32 MB, 128 MB or 256 MB which are reasonably priced. One GB cards are available but they are extremely expensive.

Instead, microdrives and other portable drives can be purchased that can hold 1 GB or more of data. If you fill a 64 MB card, you can download all of your images to the portable drive, pop the memory card back into your digital camera and continue shooting. When you're ready, plug the drive into your computer and you'll be able to view, edit and/or print all of your pictures.

Digital Cameras 101

Digital cameras (digicams) are exploding in the marketplace right now and for good reason – they are easy to use, offer many comparable features to a traditional 35mm camera, and they don't require film or processing charges. Due to the enormous amount of information regarding digital cameras, this newsletter will focus on the basics, geared more for those who have thought about purchasing a digital camera but don't know where to start.

The Basics

The major difference between 35 mm and digital cameras is where the images are stored. 35mm cameras use replaceable film, which incurs developing costs. Digital cameras store images in a removable card (CompactFlash, SmartMedia, etc.) that can be reused. For viewing your photos, simply attach the card (or camera) to your PC and download the images to your hard drive. When the images are downloaded, you can then use photo-editing software to "improve" your photos (adjust coloring, fix red-eye, etc).

When researching cameras, the first thing to do is decide what you want to use the camera for; if you want to email a few pictures to friends and family or post your pictures on the web you can buy a camera with fewer features than someone who wants to print high resolution 8 x 10 photos.

Advantages of Digital: No film or processing charges; retouch photos before printing; print only the photos you want; email or post your photos on the web very easily.

Advantages of 35mm: Less expensive initially than digital; no computer or printer necessary; no rush in printing the film; no storage limitations (or extra equipment to bring on vacation).

Moving On ...

Hearty goodbye to Jennifer, our Business Manager. She's bound for the West Coast in search of majestic mountains. Although you won't hear her answer the phone anymore, she'll continue to produce the newsletter and engage in other projects. We wish her well!

Specific Features

Color depth – Determines how many colors are visible. The human eye can see 16 million colors or 24 bits per pixel in computer terms. Look for a color depth in cameras of at least 24 bits. Professional digital cameras offer 36 bits or higher.

Focal Length – Indicates a lens' viewing angle. Some cameras have a fixed focal length while other cameras offer a telephoto (zoom) option for close-ups. The telephoto option adds considerably to the cost of the camera depending on the strength of zoom chosen. Note: there is a difference between **digital zooms** and **optical zooms**. Digital zooms crop an image in the center and then internal software will "enlarge" the picture. Optical zooms, on the other hand, use the lens as a magnification tool and in the process, adjust resolution and detail. If you're looking for crisp, clear photos at any distance, look for an optical zoom.

Image quality – One of the more important terms to understand when selecting & using a digital camera. When you take a picture, the camera will store the image in a particular format such as TIFF (uncompressed, finer detail) or JPEG (compressed, less detail). One TIFF image can be 15 MB (using a 16 MB memory card, you'll get one TIFF image per card). A compressed JPEG image, on the other hand, is usually 3-10 Kb. You'll be able to fit plenty on a 16 MB card (1 MB=1024 Kb). With all digital cameras, you will have to determine a balance between quality and quantity.

Resolution – Determines the **size** and **detail** of the image. Resolution is related to the number of pixels that the camera can read through it's sensor. Generally speaking, the more pixels the camera can capture, the finer the image will be. For instance, a 3 megapixel camera will produce a crisper image than a 1.3 megapixel camera. In applications, email and web photos require low resolution compared to 8x10 or larger photos. For printing 4x6 photos, look for a 2 megapixel camera. For 5x7 or 8x10 photos, a 3 or 4 megapixel camera will give you much better detail.

Note about resolution: Don't buy a camera with more resolution than you'll need. The higher the resolution (such as 4 megapixels and higher), the more expensive the camera will be, the more features you will have to learn how to use, and the longer it will take to download your pictures to your PC. Most casual users find 2 or 3 megapixel cameras sufficient for their needs. If you want to print high quality photos and want more advanced features like those on professional SLR cameras, opt for a 5 or 6 megapixel camera. You will pay a premium price but you won't be disappointed ...

Note about price: An entry level digital camera costs more than an entry level 35mm camera but this cost can be outweighed by film and processing charges. Remember though that you'll need a color photo printer, photo paper and cartridges if you want actual prints which increases the cost of a digital camera. One of the best advantages of digital photos over traditional film, however, is that you print only the pictures you want and you can correct any imperfections yourself before you print.
* No more trips to the drug store or worrying if there's film left in the camera.

Some final considerations: One disadvantage of digital cameras has to do with prints - they don't last as long as film prints, especially when exposed to the elements. If you save your pictures on your PC and only print them out occasionally, this won't be an issue (as long as you backup your files). If digital is still on your radar, look for these additional features: a glass lens rather than plastic, rechargeable batteries, built in microphone to record comments with each picture, optical viewfinder and/or antiglare LCD.

You may also want to look for a camera that has webcam functionality built in so you can stream live video over the internet (high speed connection suggested) with family or friends. Remember to try out as many cameras as you can and if possible, look at photos that each camera produces. If you get a camera you're comfortable using, you'll be more likely to carry it around and capture life's greatest moments!